

Around the fourth or fifth game of cribbage, Max remembered something he wanted to tell Steve.

“We had some trespassers about a week after the staging our deaths here. A bunch of high schoolers walked into the woods between here and the main road. They started a campfire and started passing around a fifth of who knows what. Cathy alerted Jenny to call the County Sheriff’s Office. However, I knew it would be a while before they arrived. As it was just past peak foliage and things being tinder dry, I wasn’t willing to wait.” Max stomped his front paws for emphasis. “I wasn’t going to have some punks burn down our forest home!”

“I tried to persuade him to not intervene,” Cathy added. “Skunks are supposed to be cautious critters.”

“But you know me, son, when I have made-up my mind that’s it. So, I made my way up there...”

Six teenagers were sitting around a makeshift campfire passing a fifth of alcohol and laughing it up.

“I’m glad things have quieted down since last week.”

“Yeah, though what that old lady said on camera kind of freaked me out.”

“Oh, come on, Seth, that’s just some old tale meant to scare kids.”

Max chirred from a few feet behind one of them trying to get their attention. They were making too much of a racket to hear him. He shook his head and waddled right into the light near the campfire and looked up around at them, which finally got their attention.

“Skunk!” One cried out scrambling back away from Max.

“Don’t make any sudden moves, or it’ll spray you,” Seth warned the others.

Max stamped his front paws and hissed at the lot of them. When they didn’t move, Max brushed the leaves away from the ground with his tail. He then backed up and wrote in the dirt:

YOU ARE NOT WELCOME HERE! PUT OUT THE FIRE AND LEAVE!

Max backed up a little more and waited for one of them to read it. The teen looked at the bottle in his hand and again at the ground.

“Guys, can you see this too, or is this stuff affecting me that badly?”

Max stamped his front paws and hissed again. When they didn’t move to put the fire out, Max became impatient. He glared at them and spoke using his vocal cords. His child-like voice wasn’t

as intimidating as he would have liked, but it's what he had. "This is Segôkw's sacred grounds! Put the fire out and leave, now! This is my last warning!" Max quickly turned around, raised his tail and gave a small warning shot right into the fire.

Max paused a moment in telling his tale before he continued. "FFFWWOOOOSSSHHHH!!!! God damn! I had no clue skunk musk was so flammable!"

Steve stared at him briefly and started laughing.

"Thank goodness I hadn't released a full payload."

"I'm thankful too," Cathy added, nuzzling Max. "It probably would have killed him."

Max nodded. "Can you picture it? Like a gasoline trail, it would have flamed right-up my ass, hit my nearly full musk glands, and BOOM! Fried skunk! As it was, I singed the fur off my ass and the base of my tail."

"Yeah," Jake jumped in. "You could say Dad experienced a really bad case of," he paused dramatically before adding in a deadpan voice, "fart burn."

Steve doubled over as he laughed harder. When he finally calmed down a bit and could breath normal again, Max continued.

"Anyway, the resulting fireworks had a very impressive effect on those punks...."

"'HOLY SHIT!' One of them cried out, reeling backwards and falling on his back. "The skunk sprays fire!. Do as he says before he sprays fire on us!"

"They quickly doused the fire and fled back through the woods, arriving back out onto the main road just as a Sherrif's deputy had pulled in behind their vehicles. I could hear the deputy from down at the campfire spot on his loudspeaker ordering them to put their hands in the air. I can just imagine the tale they tried to spin with him. Fortunately, my winter coat hadn't grown in yet or I'd probably be chilled back there the rest of the winter."